



Foreword

Haifa Bay is one of the prominent environmental pollution hotspots in Israel, with heavy industry as well as national infrastructure, including three seaports and a power station. Multiple concerns have been raised regarding the correlation between air pollution and the elevated rates of morbidity from various diseases in the Haifa Bay region, surpassing the national average, leading to longstanding civil and public efforts to evacuate the polluting industries from this area.

In June 2019, the State Comptroller published a special audit report encompassing six audit chapters focusing on various aspects of the government's environmental pollution actions in Haifa Bay. The report's Foreword presents the main weaknesses underlying the government's handling of the Haifa Bay issue and emphasizes the need for a thorough examination and resolution of this issue.

Due to its importance, I decided to conduct a follow-up audit, four years after the previous audit, to examine the extent of the rectifying of the deficiencies and the implementation of the recommendations outlined in said report in two main areas: the government's actions to promote a comprehensive long-term solution to the pollution problem in the region, and its actions to reduce existing pollution during the intermediate stage until a comprehensive and long-term solution is provided.

I was pleased to learn that following the previous report, the government adopted a significant resolution that laid the foundation for the development of the Haifa Bay area, including the cessation of petrochemical industrial activity in the region, the establishment of a dedicated planning and administration committee, and the implementation of a comprehensive and detailed multi-year work plan. However, alongside this welcome progress, the follow-up audit raised several deficiencies that were noted in the previous audit and were only slightly rectified or not at all, including the supervision of the Ministry of Environmental Protection over the emission of pollutants from industrial sources in the Haifa Bay, reporting on the implementation of national programs to prevent air pollution and to mitigate its effects, as well as the completion of a study on air pollution and morbidity in the Haifa Bay area. The follow-up audit also found gaps in areas that were not examined in the previous audit, such as the information published by the Ministry of Environmental Protection to the public on the emission of pollutants from chimneys in the factories and air pollution from shipping vessels. These deficiencies and gaps require rectification, among other things, given the implementation of government resolutions regarding the cessation of petrochemical activity in the area is expected to take years, during which residents of the area will continue to be exposed to the environmental consequences of this industrial activity.

This follow-up report is an additional wakeup call for all relevant entities to collaborate and genuinely commit to create a real change in the entire Bay area, both in the long term through



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the unyielding implementation of government resolutions, and in the interim period until the cessation of petrochemical industry operations, through increased monitoring and control of pollutant emissions. The relevant government ministries and bodies face an important national mission to transform Haifa Bay into a thriving and sustainable metropolis, creating urban connectivity between the Krayot townships and Haifa, and providing direct access from the city to the sea. Hence, the vision that within a decade, the lands on which polluting infrastructures and industrial plants currently stand will be converted into residential, employment and recreational areas, green pathways, and open areas for the benefit of the public – will indeed become a reality.

The Office of the State Comptroller, under my leadership, recognizes the significant importance of promoting comprehensive governmental measures to address environmental pollution hotspots, such as the Haifa Bay. We will continue to closely monitor this issue and conduct audits, fully understanding the direct connection between environmental protection and improving the quality of life and the safeguarding of the safety and health of the country's citizens and residents.

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State Comptroller and
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Special Report

Aspects of the Government's
Actions Concerning Environmental
Pollution in the Haifa Bay

follow-up audit



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